

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 01/17/07
#B 163

Honorable Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Becky Stockton and I reside in Helena, Montana.

I would like to thank Representative Roger Koopman for bringing this bill before you today. I think HB 163 is very important in preserving our legislative process and for the voices of the citizens/voters to be heard in this great state of ours before it is totally controlled by public employees who lobby on my taxpayer money's time and expense.

I have testified on a few bills in the past, but last session I made it a goal to testify on a regular basis. I personally made 25 trips to the Capitol to testify for or against these bills on my own time for the sake of my family. My husband can not always afford to take time off from his job to attend the hearings and testify, but since I am a stay at home, home schooling mother who is about finished schooling her children; I have taken it upon myself to get involved. I also have made it a school project for my children, so that they will learn that it is important to be involved in the process to make sure their legislators are making the best decisions for our families and for the voters. As a result of this commitment, I have sacrificed time away from my family and home, used my own car and paid my own gas, spent hundreds of hours preparing testimony on my own time, paid to copy my testimony and rearranged hundreds of appointments, so that I could testify at these hearings. Lucky for me that I live in the Capitol city and I do not have an 8 to 5, Monday through Friday job and that I do not sacrifice our income in the process of doing this. But what about those citizens who do live hundreds of miles away, who take time off from their jobs and pay their whole way to come to Helena to testify at a particular hearing on a particular bill that is close to their hearts, only to be disenchanted when they see many public employees testifying for their departments, in other words, protecting their turf, at taxpayer's expense. One of our main businesses in this state is self-employed individuals. Do you realize that these individuals stand to lose a lot of their business by canceling appointments and such and no income for that day, if they shut down their business to come to one of these hearings? If the State of Montana employees had to pay their own expenses, use their vacation time and drove hundreds of miles to attend the hearing most likely they would not be here to testify either. Anyway, it is a conflict of interest for these public employees to be testifying.

If you pass this bill it would save us money and time because there would be less people testifying on behalf of the state and more citizens would be given the chance to be heard and maybe think that the process is theirs again and start getting more involved.

People have forgotten that the state employees and the legislature work for the citizens of this state. My money speaks volumes when used by these state employees, so I want this to stop! Remember, I am only a concerned citizen, who has no political agenda – only to testify for or against a bill that affects my family and my fellow citizens' freedoms and I do this on my own time and money.

Voting yes on this bill would put the citizens back into control of their legislature and cut expenses for the taxpayer and lessen the time for the legislator to hear a bill.

Becky Stockton